the issue of high trade margins in the case of intravenous fluids. The feasibility of bringing some of the commonly used intravenous fluids under price control is being examined.

Misappropriation of Rice from FCI

999. SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH : Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether during the last year, a case of misappropriation of more than 5500 metric tonne of rice in Food Corporation of India has come to the notice of the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have enquired into the matter;

(d) if so, the findings thereof; and

(e) the action taken or proposed to be taken against the guilty officials?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUVANS PRASAD SINGH) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Food Corporation of India recently detected a case wherein two transport contractors, appointed for transporting foodgrains namely M/s Gautam Associates, Mohali and M/s Yajen Aier & Co., Pehowa had not delivered 4368 MT and 1543 MT of rice worth Rs. 4.25 crores, lifted by them for transportation ex-Kaithal and Pehowa respectively to Imphal (Manipur).

(c) to (e) On the basis of preliminary investigations the Food Corporation of India has placed under suspension its one District Manager and 6 Assistant Managers. F.I.R. has been lodged against the defaulting contractors for misappropriation of foodgrains. With the approval of the Government, the FCI has referred the case to Central Bureau of Investigation on 14.7.1997 for detailed investigations and retrieval of misappropriated rice.

Illegal Trade on Indo-Bangladesh Border

1000. PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the thriving illegal trade in commodities like salt, sugar, rice and cloths in the border areas of Bangladesh;

(b) if so, whether the Government have made any assessment of the illegal border trade;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the measures taken by the Government to check these clandestine operations in the Indo-Bangladesh border areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) Government are aware that some illegal trade in commodities like salt, sugar, rice and clothes take place in the Indo-Bangladesh border areas.

(b) and (c) Although no exact figures on quantum of foodgrains smuggled to Bangladesh are available, the seizures of essential commodities made by the Border Security Force deployed on Indo-Bangladesh border during the last three years are as follows:

Item	1995	1996	1997 (upto 30 June)
Salt (Kg)	1245838	1699625	1126571
Sugar (Kg)	855447	1567774	867472
Rice (Kg)	2000548	783102	99503
Cloth (Worth Rupees)	35129536	30524120	18956963

(d) A number of measures including reduction of gaps between Border Out Posts, intensification and increase in Patrols, erection of Observation Post Towers, use of night vision devices, construction of border roads and fences along sensitive stretches have been taken to check smuggling.

National Commission for Minorities

1001. SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR :
SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR :

Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Commission for Minorities has initiated a comprehensive study to identify the social, economic, educational, cultural and the other problems being faced by the major religious minorities of the country and to suggest measures for their solution;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the details of the panel constituted for the purpose;

(c) whether the Government have initiated similar study for the socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged people, particularly those below the poverty line; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The requisite details of the High Power Committee constituted by the National Commission for Minorities are indicated in the Statement enclosed.

(c) and (d) The Government of India, Ministry of Welfare have not conducted any similar study to identify the major religious minorities who are socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged particularly those below the poverty line.

Statement

National Commission for Minorities in its meeting held on 6.5.97 decided to constitute a High-Powered Committee to undertake a fresh comprehensive study exclusively of the problems being faced by the major religious minorities of the country. Accordingly a Study Committee on Socio-economic and Educational Problems of Religious Minorities has been constituted. The composition of the Committee is as follows:

Convenor and Chairman

Rev. Dr. Habil James Massey, Member, NCM

Members

(i) Shri Soli J. Sorabji, Jurist & Sr. Lawyer, Delhi.

(ii) Rev. Dr. Daniel Chetty, Director, Church Relations & Programme Deptt., Senate of Serampore (Univ.), Bangalore.

(iii) Prof. Iqbal Ansari, Secretary-General, Minorities Council of India, Aligarh.

(iv) Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer, Director, Institute of Islamic Studies, Mumbai.

(v) Prof. Angne Lai, Vice-Chancellor, RML Oudh Vishwavidyalaya, Falzabad, U.P.

Following are the terms of reference:

(i) to identify and study the social, economic, educational, cultural and other problems facing the principal religious minorities of India, probe into the causes of those problems, and suggest measures for their solution;

(ii) to examine specifically the role, utility and impact of the PM's 15-Point programme on Minorities (1983) and suggest ways and means for its effective implementation in letter and spirit;

(iii) to identify and highlight the causes and constraints due to which Union and State Government's special welfare schemes, fiscal policies, earmarked facilities and plan strategies are not resulting into an adequate and satisfactory socio-economic upliftment of the concerned minorities, and suggest measures for the eradication of these causes and constraints;

(iv) to examine the problems facing the concerned minorities in respect of their Constitutionally Guaranteed Fundamental Rights for establishing and administering educational institutions of their choice, and suggest measures for their solution;

(v) to make general and specific recommendations for an overall socio-economic and educational advancement of the concerned minorities and suggest the required legal and administrative reforms for achieving the same.

Freedom Fighters

1002. SHRI SATYA PAL JAIN : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of freedom fighters who expired since 15.8.1972 but the freedom fighters pension could not be sanctioned to them;

(b) the cases of widows of the deceased freedom fighters for the release of family pension and the arrears of the family pension are kept pending since August 15, 1972 and the reasons for the delay in finalising their cases; and

(c) the number of cases of the arrears of family pension admissible to the next of kin i.e. surviving legal heirs of the deceased freedom fighters are yet to be sanctioned and paid?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) No such statistics are being maintained.

(b) and (c) The procedure for transfer of family pension and grant of arrears in the name of eligible